What Is Claimed Is:

1. A ladder assembly comprising:

a ladder portion and an attachment portion, the ladder portion having a plurality of rungs and being pivotally connected to the attachment portion, the attachment portion having a clamping device that is configured and adapted to releasably secure the attachment portion to an upright tailgate of a vehicle, the ladder portion being selectively lockable in at least a first pivotal orientation relative to the attachment portion.

2. A ladder assembly in accordance with claim 1 wherein the ladder portion comprises first and second sections, each of the first and second sections of the ladder portion comprising a plurality of the rungs, the first section of the ladder portion being movably connected to the second section of the ladder portion in a manner such that the ladder portion is adjustable between a collapsed configuration and an extended configuration.

3. A ladder assembly in accordance with claim 2 wherein the first section of the ladder portion is pivotally connected to the second section of the ladder portion such that the ladder portion is adjustable between the collapsed configuration and

the extended configuration by pivotally moving the first section relative to the second section.

4. A ladder assembly in accordance with claim 1 wherein the ladder portion is selectively lockable in a second pivotal orientation relative to the attachment portion.

5. A ladder assembly in accordance with claim 4 further comprising a locking mechanism, the locking mechanism being fixed to the ladder portion in a manner such that the locking mechanism pivots with the ladder portion relative to the attachment portion, the locking mechanism comprising a movable locking member and a movable release member, the locking member being movable between a locking position and an unlocking position and being biased from the unlocking position toward the locking position, the locking member being engagable with the attachment portion when the locking member is in the locking position in a manner to selectively lock the ladder portion in the first and second pivotal orientations relative to the attachment portion, the release member being operatively connected to the locking member in a manner such that the locking member is movable from the locking position to the unlocking position in response to a force applied to the release member.

6. A ladder assembly in accordance with claim 5 wherein the pivotal connection between the ladder portion and the attachment portion defines an axis, and wherein the release member is configured such that the force applied to the release member creates a torque on the ladder portion that acts about the axis.

7. A vehicle comprising;

an upright tailgate; and

a ladder assembly in accordance with claim 1, the attachment portion of the ladder assembly being secured to the upright tailgate via the clamping device.

8. A vehicle in accordance with claim 7 wherein the upright tailgate comprises a top surface and opposite front and back sides, and wherein the clamping device comprises cooperating threaded members and first and second clamping members, the cooperating threaded members being threadably engaged with each other and being connected to the first and second clamping members in a manner such that rotational movement of the cooperating threaded members relative to each other acts to force the first and second clamping members toward each other, one of the first and second clamping members being engaged with one of the front and back sides of the upright tailgate, the other of the first and second clamping members

being engaged with the other of the front and back sides of the upright tailgate, the first and second clamping members being forced toward each other via the cooperating threaded members.

9. A method comprising:

providing a vehicle, the vehicle comprising an upright tailgate;

providing a ladder assembly, the ladder assembly comprising a ladder portion and an attachment portion, the ladder portion having first and second sections, each of the first and second sections of the ladder portion comprising a plurality of rungs, the first section of the ladder portion being movably connected to the second section of the ladder portion in a manner such that the ladder portion is adjustable between a collapsed configuration and an extended configuration, the first section of the ladder portion also being pivotally connected to the attachment portion and selectively lockable in at least a first pivotal orientation relative to the attachment portion;

attaching the attachment portion of the ladder assembly to the tailgate of the vehicle;

pivoting the ladder portion relative to the attachment portion in a manner moving the first section of the ladder portion to the first pivotal orientation relative to the

attachment portion;

locking the first section of the ladder portion in the first pivotal orientation relative to the attachment portion; and

moving the second section of the ladder portion relative to the first section of the ladder portion in a manner adjusting the ladder portion between the collapsed configuration and the extended configuration.

10. A method in accordance with claim 9 wherein the step of providing the vehicle occurs in a manner such that the upright tailgate of the vehicle comprises a top surface and opposite front and back sides, and wherein the step of providing the ladder assembly occurs in a manner such that the attachment portion of the ladder assembly comprises an adjustable clamp, the step of attaching the attachment portion of the ladder assembly to the tailgate of the vehicle comprising adjusting the clamp of the attachment portion in a manner such that the clamp applies a clamping force against the front and back sides of the tailgate and occurring in a manner such that the attachment portion straddles the top surface of the tailgate.

11. A method in accordance with claim 10 wherein the step of providing the ladder assembly occurs in a manner such that the clamping device comprises cooperating threaded members and

first and second clamping members, the cooperating threaded members being threadably engaged with each other, the step of attaching the attachment portion of the ladder assembly to the tailgate of the vehicle comprising rotating the cooperating threaded members relative to each other in a manner generating the clamping force.

12. A method in accordance with claim 9 wherein the step of moving the second section of the ladder portion relative to the first section of the ladder portion comprises pivotally moving the first and second sections relative to each other.

13. A method in accordance with claim 9 wherein the step of providing the ladder assembly occurs in a manner such that the first section of the ladder portion is selectively lockable in a second pivotal orientation relative to the attachment portion, and wherein the method further comprises steps of:

unlocking the first section of the ladder portion from the first pivotal orientation;

moving the first section of the ladder portion from the first pivotal orientation to the second pivotal orientation; and

locking the first section of the ladder portion in the second pivotal orientation.

14. A method in accordance with claim 13 wherein the step of providing the ladder assembly occurs in a manner such that the ladder portion comprises a movable release member and such that the first section of the ladder portion is biased from the second pivotal orientation to the first pivotal orientation by gravity, the step of unlocking the first section of the ladder portion from the first pivotal orientation comprising exerting a force on the release member in a manner causing the release member to move relative to the first section so as to thereby unlock the first section of the ladder portion from the first pivotal orientation, the force acting in a direction to counteract the gravitational biasing that acts on the first section of the ladder portion.

15. A method comprising:

providing a vehicle, the vehicle comprising an upright tailgate, the upright tailgate having a top surface and opposite front and back sides;

providing a ladder assembly, the ladder assembly comprising a ladder portion and an attachment portion, the ladder portion comprising a plurality of rungs, the attachment portion comprising an adjustable clamp, the ladder portion being connected to the attachment portion;

attaching the attachment portion of the ladder assembly to the tailgate of the vehicle in a manner such that the

attachment portion straddles the top surface of the tailgate;

adjusting the clamp of the attachment portion in a manner such that the clamp applies a clamping force against the front and back sides of the tailgate.

16. A method in accordance with claim 15 wherein the step of providing the ladder assembly occurs in a manner such that the ladder portion comprises first and second sections, each of the first and second sections of the ladder portion comprising a plurality of the rungs, the first section of the ladder portion being movably connected to the second section of the ladder portion in a manner such that the ladder portion is adjustable between a collapsed configuration and an extended configuration, the method further comprising a step of moving the second section of the ladder portion relative to the first section of the ladder portion in a manner adjusting the ladder portion between the collapsed configuration and the extended configuration.

17. A method in accordance with claim 16 wherein the step of moving the second section of the ladder portion relative to the first section of the ladder portion comprises pivotally moving the first and second sections relative to each other.

18. A method in accordance with claim 15 wherein the step of providing the ladder assembly occurs in a manner such that the

ladder portion is pivotally connected to the attachment portion and selectively lockable in at least a first pivotal orientation relative to the attachment portion, and wherein the method further comprises a step of locking the ladder portion in the first pivotal orientation relative to the attachment portion.

19. A method in accordance with claim 18 wherein the step of providing the ladder assembly occurs in a manner such that the ladder portion is selectively lockable in a second pivotal orientation relative to the attachment portion, and wherein the method further comprises steps of:

unlocking the ladder portion from the first pivotal orientation;

moving the ladder portion from the first pivotal orientation to the second pivotal orientation; and

locking the ladder portion in the second pivotal orientation.

20. A method in accordance with claim 19 wherein the step of providing the ladder assembly occurs in a manner such that the ladder portion comprises a movable release member and such that the ladder portion is biased from the second pivotal orientation to the first pivotal orientation by gravity, the

step of unlocking the ladder portion from the first pivotal orientation comprising exerting a force on the release member that causes the release member to move relative to the ladder portion in a manner thereby unlocking the ladder portion from the first pivotal orientation, the force acting in a direction to counteract the gravitational biasing that acts on the ladder portion.

21. A method in accordance with claim 15 wherein the step of providing the ladder assembly occurs in a manner such that the clamping device comprises cooperating threaded members and first and second clamping members, the cooperating threaded members being threadably engaged with each other, the step of attaching the attachment portion of the ladder assembly to the tailgate of the vehicle comprising rotating the cooperating threaded members relative to each other in a manner generating the clamping force.

22. A ladder assembly comprising:

a ladder portion and an attachment portion, the ladder portion having first and second sections, each of the first and second sections of the ladder portion comprising a plurality of rungs, the first section of the ladder portion being movably connected to the second section of the ladder portion in a manner such that the ladder portion is adjustable

between a collapsed configuration and an extended configuration, the first section of the ladder portion also being pivotally connected to the attachment portion and selectively lockable in at least a first pivotal orientation relative to the attachment portion, the attachment portion of the ladder assembly being configured and adapted to attach to an upright tailgate of the vehicle.

23. A vehicle comprising;

an upright tailgate; and

a ladder assembly in accordance with claim 22, the attachment portion of the ladder assembly being secured to the upright tailgate.

24. A vehicle in accordance with claim 23 wherein the attachment portion of the ladder assembly comprises an adjustable clamping device, the attachment portion of the ladder assembly being secured to the upright tailgate via the clamping device.

25. A ladder assembly in accordance with claim 22 wherein the first section of the ladder portion is pivotally connected to the second section of the ladder portion such that the ladder portion is adjustable between the collapsed configuration and the extended configuration by pivotally moving the first section relative to the second section.

26. A ladder assembly in accordance with claim 22 wherein the first section of the ladder portion is selectively lockable in a second pivotal orientation relative to the attachment portion.

27. A ladder assembly in accordance with claim 26 further comprising a locking mechanism, the locking mechanism being fixed to the first section of the ladder portion in a manner such that the locking mechanism pivots with the first section of the ladder portion relative to the attachment portion, the locking mechanism comprising a movable locking member and a movable release member, the locking member being movable between a locking position and an unlocking position and being biased from the unlocking position toward the locking position, the locking member being engagable with the attachment portion when the locking member is in the locking position in a manner to selectively lock the first section of the ladder portion in the first and second pivotal orientations relative to the attachment portion, the release member being operatively connected to the locking member in a manner such that the locking member is movable from the locking position to the unlocking position in response to a force applied to the release member.

28. A ladder assembly in accordance with claim 27 wherein the pivotal connection between the ladder portion and the attachment portion defines an axis, and wherein the release member is configured such that the force applied to the release member creates a torque on the ladder portion that acts about the axis.